



**Testimony of Children's Mental Health Connecticut  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
February 18, 2016**

**Department of Public Health (DPH) budget cuts and changes  
in Governor's proposed Midterm Budget Adjustments FY2017**

**H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL  
YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017**

Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Susan Kelley and I am staff to Children's Mental Health Connecticut, and Children's Policy Manager for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut. Children's Mental Health Connecticut (CMHC) is a new statewide advocacy and policy coalition that grew out of the Keep the Promise Children's Committee and comprises a broad spectrum of stakeholders in children's mental health. Abby Anderson, Executive Director of Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA), and Ann Smith, Executive Director of African Caribbean Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP) are the interim co-chairs of CMHC. CMHC seeks to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality mental health services that are family-centered and culturally responsive. I am here today on behalf of CMHC and NAMI CT to express concerns regarding the proposed midterm budget adjustments for FY2017 as it relates to the DPH.

Thank you very much for the hard work that members of the Appropriations Committee have undertaken to find fair solutions to our fiscal problems. We understand that difficult choices will have to be made this session regarding the state's budget.

*The Governor's proposed total budget cut of \$1.24 million from school based health centers (SBHC) would be detrimental to the wellbeing of Connecticut's children and we urge you to reject this proposal.* This cut comprises a reduction of \$477,431 during the current fiscal year, annualizes this reduction, and further takes away an additional 5.75 percent from the current \$11.6 million budget of SBHCs. The proposed \$1.24 total cut is coming on the heels of significant budget reductions to SBHCs totaling \$1.09 million in 2015. These reductions

Proposed fiscal solutions, even in challenging monetary times, should support the state's priorities. In the past several years, Connecticut has made it a priority to increase access to mental health services for children, as reflected in PA 13-178 that mandates development and implementation of a Children's Behavioral Health Plan (Children's Plan) and in the Sandy Hook Commission Report, among others. Although one in five children has symptoms of a mental health condition, only a quarter of the children have access to appropriate mental health services. In Connecticut, this leaves approximately 125,000 children with unmet behavioral health needs. The Children's Plan recognizes that schools are one of the best places for children to access mental health care.

*There are not enough mental health services available to children and youth at the current funding levels. The Governor's proposed budget cuts to SBHCs, in contravention of the Children's Plan, will have a*

*devastating impact—fewer students will have immediate access to care for many serious health issues that impact school performance and academic success.*

Investing in SBHCs helps improve health and school outcomes for students in Connecticut. For example, in the last five years, demand for SBHC mental health services increased by 11 percent; and 41 percent of all visits to SBHC's are for mental health services (up from 30 percent). Research shows that students that use SBHCs are 74 percent more likely to get the mental health care they need than non-users of SBHCs. According to a 2012 report issued by the General Assembly's Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee entitled, "*Adolescent Health Coordination and School Based Health Centers*," "Students enrolled in a school based health center gained three times as much classroom seat time as students not enrolled, and SBHCs significantly reduced the number of early dismissals from school in comparison with students who received school nursing services alone." While there are 96 SBHCs, more are needed as there are 1,179 public schools in the state.

The proposed funding cuts to SBHC's are contrary to Connecticut's goals for integrating mental health care in overall healthcare and in settings where they are most accessible to children and youth, such as SBHCs.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Kelley  
Children's Mental Health Connecticut  
Coalition members include:

AFCAMP  
CTJJA  
Stamford Youth Services  
Empowering Children and Families  
NAMI Connecticut  
FAVOR  
Connecticut Legal Services  
Office of the Child Advocate  
Connecticut Voices for Children  
Center for Children's Advocacy  
The Village for Children and Families  
Children Guidance Clinics of CT  
Jesse Lewis Choose Love Foundation  
Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, CT  
CT Association of School Based Health Centers  
Kids in Crisis  
Connecticut Association for Foster and Adoptive Parents

